

Amendments to the Claims

Claims 1, 3, and 4 have been amended without any intention of disclaiming equivalents thereof. Claims 14 and 30-67 have been cancelled without prejudice to their subsequent reintroduction into this application or their introduction into a related application. The following list of claims replaces all prior versions and lists of claims in the application.

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) An electronic brokerage method of ~~selling~~ purchasing units of a product through formation of a virtual purchasing collective that permits consumers to buy at a price per unit competitive with the price paid by bulk purchasers of the product, or provides to consumers an opportunity to purchase a product that otherwise may not be available to them, the method comprising the steps of:
 - a) posting, in a manner electronically accessible to consumers, notice of a proposed virtual purchasing collective;
 - b) receiving data from consumers interested in purchasing the product data comprising bids;
 - c) incorporating the consumers into a virtual collective; and
 - d) using the data bids from the consumers to negotiate a price on behalf of the virtual collective.
2. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein the posting includes notice of the availability of units of the product for purchase.
3. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1 wherein ~~the posting step c~~ includes ~~notice of sorting the consumers into~~ a plurality of ~~proposed~~ virtual purchasing collectives.
4. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1 wherein the ~~data include a bid comprising bids~~ comprise a commitment to buy a number of the units and the price the consumer is willing to pay for that number.

5. (Original) The method of claim 4 wherein the bids further comprise a commitment to buy a number of the units before a future date.
6. (Original) The method of claim 4 wherein step a comprises posting instructions for consumers sufficient to enable them to place a bid electronically.
7. (Original) The method of claim 4 comprising the additional step of providing software to the consumers to permit them to transmit a bid electronically.
8. (Original) The method of claim 4 comprising the additional step of analyzing the bids as a Dutch auction to establish a per unit price and a number of units to be specified in a collective bid on behalf of the virtual purchasing collective.
9. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein step d comprises submitting at least one collective bid to a third party seller.
10. (Original) The method of claim 9 comprising using the data to establish terms of the collective bid.
11. (Original) The method of claim 9 comprising submitting a plurality of collective bids to a third party seller, wherein the bids with larger numbers of units are at lower costs per unit.
12. (Original) The method of claim 10 wherein the terms include price.
13. (Original) The method of claim 10 wherein the terms include quantity.
14. (Cancelled)
15. (Original) The method of claim 1 comprising the additional step of causing units of the product to be delivered to at least a subset of the consumers that are willing to pay at least the price negotiated on behalf of the virtual collective.
16. (Original) The method of claim 1 comprising the additional steps of collecting payment from and delivering units to at least a subset of the consumers.

17. (Original) The method of claim 16 wherein the price per unit negotiated in step d is a price lower than the price per unit collected from the consumers to whom the units of the product are delivered so as to generate a profit.
18. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein step d comprises negotiating with a third party seller.
19. (Original) The method of claim 18 wherein the third party seller comprises plural entities that act individually or collectively.
20. (Original) The method of claim 1 comprising the additional step of collecting a commission from consumers that take delivery and pay for their respective numbers of units.
21. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein the units are fungible.
22. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein the units are shares of a security.
23. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein the product is selected from the group consisting of electric power, computer chips, furniture, precious stones, petroleum products, printed materials, office products, building materials, machinery, consumer electronics, precious metals, long- distance telephone services, tickets to theaters, tickets to concerts, tickets to sports events, transportation services, hotel space, railroad services, delivery services, medical supplies, advertising, clothing, pharmaceuticals, broadcast time, rental space, manufacturing space, storage space, labor, insurance, interests in real property, tax credits, and alcoholic beverages.
24. (Original) The method of claim 23 wherein the product is electric power.
25. (Original) The method of claim 23 wherein the product is a petroleum product.
26. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein step a is conducted by posting the data on a network to subscribers seeking to consider a purchase of units of the product.
27. (Original) The method of claim 26 comprising the additional step of collecting a subscription fee from the subscribers.

28. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein step a is conducted by posting a web site comprising the data including links to various categories of data and information informative of the quality, source, and specifications of the units.

29. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein data that are informative of the qualities and specifications of the product are posted on an internet site through links to sellers or distributors of units of a product that is the target purchase of the consumer.

30 – 67. (Cancelled)